

NEFIRS NEWS

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Written by Lori Loyd

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HAVE YOU REPORTED YET?

Thank you to everyone who submitted 2005 reports and are reporting in 2006. We are no longer accepting past year's reports – only 2006 incidents.

Accepting old reports has caused problems in doing statistics. Effective immediately we will only accept reports for the current year. All 2006 reports **MUST** be in no later than **March 31, 2007**.

We know this may be a hardship for some departments who received FEMA grants in the past and failed to report, but we cannot produce accurate statistics for a year if we are still receiving data two or three years later.

Please get your reports up to date so you can meet the March 31 deadline.

POLICY CHANGES

Releasing Reports to the Public - In the past, we have considered NEFIRS reports to be public records and have given them out to anyone requesting a copy of the report. We have revised this policy since the report was not generated by our office. We will not release reports unless we have permission of the fire department who submitted the report to us.

We implemented this change in July 2006. If we receive a request for a fire department report, we will refer the person to the fire department. If the fire department wants us to release the report, they will need to contact me at (402) 471-9472 or by email at lori.loyd@sfm.ne.gov.

I will add a statement to the Annual Fire Department Resource Inventory to allow departments to check a box giving us permission to release any reports, contact the department before releasing any reports, or never release a report. This will be kept in our fire department database and referred to when we receive a request.

Invalid Reports - Another policy change concerns invalid reports. Invalid reports are reports that have critical errors – missing a required field or module, a code is invalid, etc. This change is being made for consistency between electronic and paper reporting. Paper reports that are incomplete are returned to the department for correction. If the department does not return the reports to this office then they cannot be included in statistics.

When I receive data from departments and import it to the federal server, I will advise you if there are any errors. Departments who are using the Federal Data Entry Tool will receive an email from me when I find invalid reports that have not been corrected (I generally check once a month).

Everyone who uses software should have these errors flagged at the time they save their reports and should go back at that time and correct the errors. If I notify you of errors and your software did not indicate this as an error, you should contact your vendor and make sure you have the latest version of the software.

After I notify the department that there is an invalid report(s) and what needs to be done to correct the report, departments will have three months to correct the report or it will be deleted from the system. If that is the only report a department submits then that department will not be counted as reporting for the year.

If you notice missing incidents on the Incident Listing I send out annually it is possible it was never received by this office or it was but was invalid and never corrected and therefore, deleted from the system.

Your reports are important to us and we want all departments to report. However if the reports are incorrect, we lose valuable information. This information is beneficial in decreasing fires and saving lives. Please feel

free to contact me if you do not understand the error(s) or do not know what you need to do to correct the error(s). I will be more than happy to answer your questions or walk you through completing a few reports so you understand what you are doing.

If I'm not available, you can contact Cathy or go to our website, www.sfm.ne.gov to find the answer. We have several handouts, Frequently Asked Questions, coding questions and answers, etc to assist you in completing the reports.

WILDLAND FIRES

Any department who gave aid to Valentine, Chadron or Harrison during their wildland fires should fill out a NEFIRS report showing they gave aid. You only need to complete one report showing the entire time you were at the fire. The Alarm Date and Time is the time you left your home base, Arrival Date and Time are when you arrived at the fire and checked in at the command center and the Last Unit Cleared Date and Time is when you returned to your home base.

Departments who had wildland fires in their jurisdiction need to fill out a report on the original fire and an exposure report for every structure that burned as a result of that fire. It is also considered by USFA to be an exposure if the fire spreads from grass to grass but the property owner changes. If there were multiple wildland fires in your jurisdiction at the same time then each fire would receive a separate incident number.

If you have any questions or need help in completing your reports, don't hesitate to contact me.

FireRMS USERS

This is just a reminder to departments who use the FireRMS software (originally Sunpro, then Aether and now owned by BIO-key International). When exporting your data, please be sure you do the NFIRS export and not the other export. If you use the other export you will include information in your data that is not compatible with the NFIRS system. If I receive a file that is not done with the NFIRS export I will return it to the department. If you

use the correct export your filename should start with "NFIRS export for . . ."

If your filename has "Complete incidents only" in the file name, this indicates that there are incidents that are not being exported to me because they contain errors or are not marked as complete. It is important that you correct the problem so all your incidents are exported. For assistance, call BIO-key International's tech support at (800) 355-1313.

REPORTING REMINDERS

NOTE: References to fields and sections are by the names the USFA gave the objects. Some software vendors changed the names and/or locations. Hopefully you will still understand what I am referring to. If not, let me know.

- Incident numbers **must be all numeric** – no letters, dashes, etc. Those using the Federal Data Entry Tool will find that it allows you to enter these, but doing so will cause problems when you try to retrieve your incidents.
- The Alarm, Arrival and Last Unit Cleared Date and Time are required fields even though there isn't a star by Last Unit Cleared. Be sure to enter times using the 24 hour clock. Please pay close attention to the dates and times that are entered. I'm still seeing response times of several hours.
- It is also important that the dates and times entered on the Apparatus and EMS Module fall into the same date and time range that was entered on the Basic Module. Many errors occur because, for example, the Last Unit Cleared time on the Apparatus Module will be after the Last Unit Cleared time that was entered on the Basic Module.
- If you transport patients from one facility to another in a non-emergency mode, e.g., a nursing home patient in one town to a hospital in another town, please enter the alarm time as the time you picked up the patient to transport or the time you arrived at the station to go pick up the patient. Do not use the time you received the call to arrange the transport. This skews the response times. The arrival time may be the same as the alarm time or if you used the time you arrive at the station to go pick up the patient, then you could enter the time you arrived at the patient's location as the arrival time.

- Do **NOT** use codes that have (Conversion Only) after them. These codes are exclusively for converting NFIRS 4.1 data to the NFIRS 5.0 format. They are not valid codes to be used in completing a 5.0 incident report. Example: Incident Type 110 is a conversion only code. Use Incident Type 111 Structure Fire instead.
- Don't forget to complete a Fire Module for Incident Types 111-173. This module is required for all fires unless contained (Incident Types 113-118) or Mutual Aid Given (3 or 4).
- Be sure you report all fire fatalities and civilian fire injuries. Don't wait for a copy of our investigation report before sending in reports. The NFIRS reports are supposed to be what your department did at the scene and won't necessarily mirror the SFM investigative report.
- The contained Incident Type codes (113-118) are for structure fires only. These codes should not be used for outside fires as there are appropriate codes for those, e.g. 151 for Outside rubbish, trash or waste fire.
- Please try to avoid using "unknown" codes, e.g., Incident Type 100 and Action Taken 00, as much as possible. Try to find a code that comes as close as possible to describing the incident. Only use the "unknown" codes if you can not find a more descriptive code. This means you may have to fill out more modules, but the additional information is important. Don't use the "unknown" codes, especially Incident Type 100, just to be counted as reporting to meet grant or other requirements.
- If you code an incident to the Incident Type 130 code series, the Mobile Property section on the Fire Module (H) must be completed.

FEMA Help Desk:

Phone: (888) 382-3827

Email at fema-nfirshhelp@dhs.gov

The Help Desk is available from 8:30 to 4:30 Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Don't be surprised if they refer you back to Cathy or me though.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR HELP

Lori: Phone (402) 471-9472

Email lori.loyd@sfm.ne.gov

Also send data files to my email address

Cathy: Phone (402) 471-9479

Email cathy.wann@sfm.ne.gov